

How to Code

A bit rambling about the process

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Just as one might presume a glass half full or half empty, the many different ways that you can approach coding your data can feel intimidating or invigorating. While I don't see any one method as better than any other, there are some aspects of a project that might at least help determine an initial course of action. Here are a few questions to consider.

- **How much time do you have?**

Be honest and be generous. Qualitative data analysis is time consuming, and certain approaches even more so. With looming deadlines and hundreds of pages of text, does it make sense to process line-by-line or to paraphrase and summarize the entirety of your corpus? Don't abandon these more time-consuming methods but be realistic about how far you can take them in your project.

- **Will you use AI?**

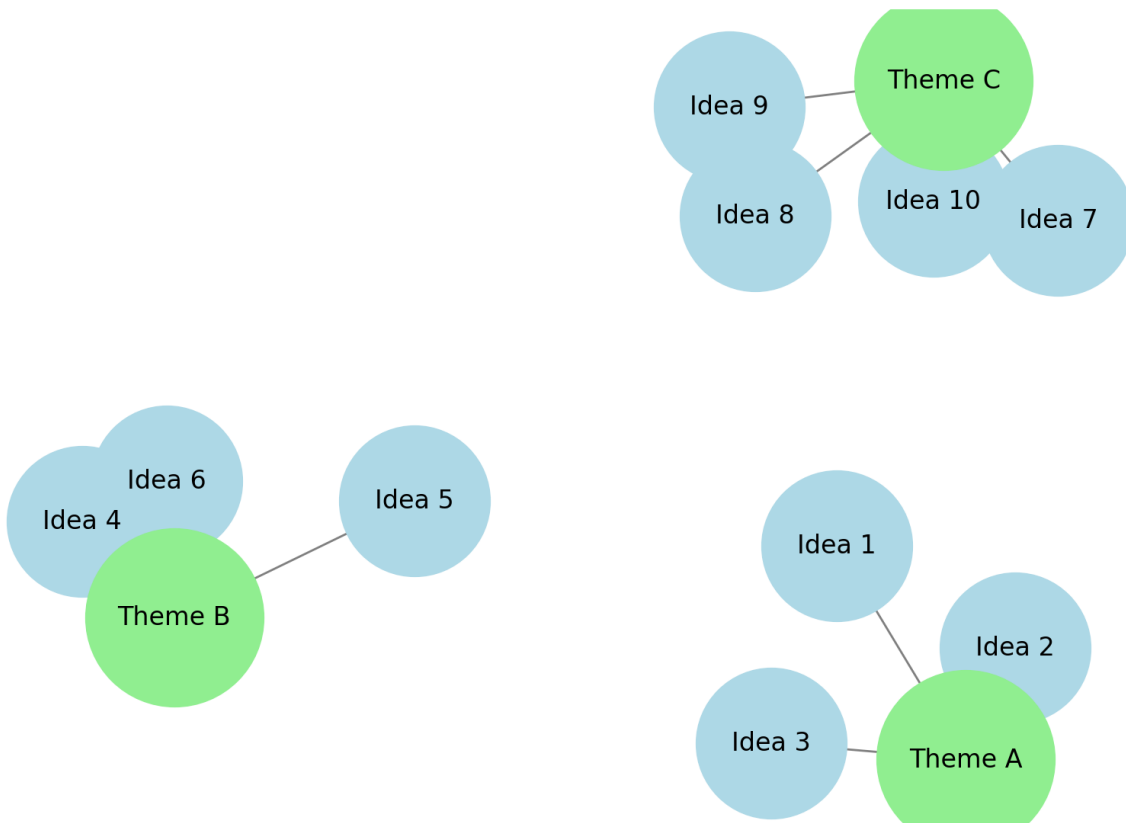
Regardless of how you feel about AI, are you even able to share the data you've collected? Have you thought about how you'll document your methods if you do use AI Assist? AI Assist is new technology, and it requires a bit of organization before you jump in with it, so plan ahead.

- **Do you have a code system already in mind?**

Considering you've developed research questions, interview scripts or survey questions, and likely reviewed a significant amount of literature, you probably have an idea of what will be in the data. Establishing some structure early on can be very helpful, but don't let it allow you to ignore things that don't fit into the current code system.

- Will work you small to large or large to small?

Again, there is no right or wrong way here, but the operations are different and therefore you'll want to use different tools to accomplish the task. Take a look at the diagram below.



If you were to approach this from big to small, you'd likely manually code in the Document Browser (e.g., by coding the response for a particular question in your interview) and then using the smart coding tool to subcategorize the segment for more precise aspects of the idea or theme. If you worked the opposite direction, you might use the open coding mode to go line-by-line and then take your numerous codes into the Creative Coding tool to reorganize your code system.

Final Thoughts –coding is carried out so that you can make some sense out of your data. There is not a single best way to do this, but there will be a way that makes sense for you, so try on some different approaches and make a process your own.